

they could not emerge ; when these ice-fields melted, a process which was not completed until 7,000 years ago, an age of migration and of race-mixture supervened which still continues.

To deal fully, however, with this most interesting book would occupy more space than is available in this magazine. We need only note, in concluding, that the whole work is regarded by its author as a preliminary sketch of a more complete treatise which he hopes eventually to publish. That the date of its publication may not be unduly postponed is a wish that will be shared by all the readers of the present book.

E. W. MACBRIDE.

Fisher, The Right Hon. Herbert, M.P., F.B.A., F.R.S., LL.D.
The Common Weal. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1924. Pp.
296. 7s. 6d. net.

THE plan of the author, in these twelve lectures—delivered under the Stevenson Trust to the University and City of Glasgow—was to allow his “thoughts to play freely and discursively round some of the topics” connected with the subject of Citizenship; and his purpose was evidently to present in each case a balanced, impartial and judicial statement. Now, no one can deny the merit of impartiality; but it is equally undeniable that extreme anxiety to avoid taking a side is apt to result in ambiguity and flabbiness in the conclusions. Some such weakness we seem to detect in the seventh lecture, “The Claims of Race,” in which the author seeks to balance the accounts between heredity and environment. There is clear recognition of the importance of Eugenics to social welfare and of the part played by heredity in the improvement or deterioration of racial quality. But there is a tendency to qualify conclusions so that they lose much of their force. For instance, in commenting upon the amazing precocity of Mozart’s genius and his musical ancestry, the author concludes: “And yet can we be sure what would have happened if Mozart’s father had received no musical education, or if the sensitive child . . . had been transported in infancy to a rude log hut in the Canadian prairie far from musical instruments and musical thought . . . Even in Mozart’s case we cannot affirm with certainty that environment did not count for much.”

In this rather meticulous proviso we note a tendency common to politicians and educationists, whose activities are exclusively concerned with the control of the human environment; the tendency to approach the phenomena of heredity in a spirit of severe scepticism while accepting the alleged influences of the environment with easy credulity. Little account seems to be taken of the commonness of a musical environment and the rarity of musical genius.

There is also a tendency to exaggerate our ignorance. “The laws which govern the emergence of genius . . . still remain in the darkest obscurity. We do not know how to breed genius.” But the aim of modern Eugenics is not to breed genius. It is to eliminate the defective. And with this aim the author is in full sympathy. If he is disposed to limit the operation of eugenic methods to the grossly unfit and abnormal, he at least emphasizes the need for action within

those limits. It is only to be regretted that so few public men have given to this important subject the careful examination and the serious thought of which there is abundant evidence in this volume.

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Hocking, William Ernest, (Professor of Philosophy in Harvard University). *Human Nature and its Re-Making*. Oxford University Press. London, 1928. Price 18/-. Pp. 490.

THIS is a profoundly interesting and important book which we have read with great pleasure and profit, but its bearing on eugenics is slight. We recommend it most heartily to all of our readers who are interested in the deepest problems of man's being and destiny, but it would be out of place to discuss such themes in the *Eugenics Review*. We shall therefore confine our remarks to the few passages which have a eugenic bearing, but any criticisms we may make must not be interpreted as in any way reflecting on the general value of the book which we estimate very highly.

We think that Professor Hocking is inclined to under-estimate the importance of what he terms the "born" part of man. He remarks that man differs from the lower animals in having fewer inherited specialised instincts; that his main characteristic is that he is "educable" and that his nature is largely determined by the pressure of the social environment in which he lives, so that for instance France continues to produce typical Frenchmen. He says further, that the difficulty of eugenics is that it is impossible to find means to persuade the lower and less worthy races to seek Nirvana.

Now all this is true, but besides educability, there is another factor in man's nature which is inherited and which is of enormous social importance, that is what for want of a better name, we may term *élan vital*. It corresponds closely to what in Cambridge boating slang was termed "guts." Perhaps courage and perseverance come near to describing it. There is every reason to believe that if an original stock characterised by this *élan* dies out of a nation through the multiplication of inferior strains, the social tradition will slowly and certainly undergo degeneration and the original civilization will eventually disappear. We may remark incidentally that the central point of Elliott-Smith's revolutionary and epoch-making discoveries in anthropology is just this; civilization, according to him, spread over the world thousands of years ago, and died out with the disappearance of the superior races who introduced it. Not only do varied races differ from one another in the intensity of *élan*, but under modern conditions in every race germ-weakened individuals with lessened vitality, i.e., *élan*, crop up. These individuals are often very prolific and tend to propagate a degenerate stock, and the problem of preventing this is not less urgent than the problem of the disappearance of the more primitive races. The best and only means it seems to us of persuading undesirable elements to "seek Nirvana" is to emphasise parental responsibility and force every parent to provide efficiently for his own offspring, with the threat of eventual sterilization if he fails to do so. As for the primitive races they are "seeking Nirvana"